A Lucian for our Times

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Edited by

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**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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FOREWORD

This volume has come about in part from that rare opportunity, namely a university Classics department with more than one Lucian specialist. After my arrival in Canterbury it seemed to Professor Anderson and myself too good an opportunity to let go to waste. We were very fortunate in the quality of papers we had submitted to the conference and I believe that the resulting book shows that our confidence in the concept was well founded. Certainly for an author of such quality as Lucian, with over seventy works to his name, it is remarkable how much research there is still to be done. I was fortunate to be invited to the Lucianic Symposium at the University of Adiyaman, Turkey in Octobber 2008. What was striking there was not only the wide variety of papers on show, but also the absence of overlap in content between the research that appeared in each instance. While commentaries are starting to appear on certain of the more popular works, such as the *Parasite,* the *True Histories* or *How to Write History*, very many of Lucian's works have not been examined in close detail. Nevertheless, in this volume the focus has been outwards, with a view to the way that Lucian's writing informs us about and reflects the society of the second century AD, in the hope that it can be of use to social and political historians, those interested in the philosophy of the period and those interested in ancient religion, as well as those of us primarily occupied with ancient literature *per se.*

Before anything, though, a certain number of thanks are in order both to those involved in the conference and those who have helped see this volume into print: Conferences need funding and we were very lucky and grateful for the financial support of the British Academy's Conference Grant Scheme. Professor Ewen Bowie kindly provided support for the application to that body, as well as attending and contributing to discussions on the day. Financial support was also provided by the Kent Institute for the Advanced Study of the Humanities (KIASH). Much needed administrative support was provided by Mrs Maureen Nunn, who not only helped with the financial details, but also heroically stepped in, when our accommodation provider for delegates left us high and dry at the last minute. Professor Anderson and Mrs Margaret Anderson graciously ferried those attending the conference to their replacement accommodation and, in one instance, back to trains at the end of the conference, for which

this organiser is very grateful. Ms Kirsty Mason was invaluable help with preparing for the arrival of delegates and providing cheerful support as the conference progressed. I was most grateful to Professor Anderson for handling the running of the conference papers, leaving me free to handle any nightmares that arose on the day in the background. In preparing the volume Ms Amanda Millar and Ms Carol Koulikourdi of Cambridge Scholar's Publishing have supported me through the different administrative and typological hurdles. I have been lucky in having Mr Andy Crane and Ms Lauren Moore as PhD students, on whom I could call for support with editing and proof-reading as this volume has taken shape. Professor Peter Toohey of the University of Calgary came through with last-minute inspiration for the title of this volume.

Lastly, my thanks go out to the conference delegates, both those whose papers appear here and those who could not. It was a lively and fascinating conference, and it has been equally fascinating for me to work with the papers that have come out of it. We were especially fortunate to have Mr Matthew MacLeod attend and present. His editions of Lucian's works have by equal measure enabled and provoked much modern Lucianic research. It was a great pleasure for all the delegates to see him and it is to him that this volume is dedicated.

A.B.
Canterbury,
August 2009

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges in teaching Classical Studies to undergraduate students is to see that the students consider ancient literature as much as possible in its context. Many apparently hold the ancient world as a sort of eternal abstract idea, created in the past to be enjoyed in the early 21st century. When it is pointed out that Lucian's first concern was to communicate with his contemporaries and the question is put to the student as to how his audience would have understood his works, the cry goes up "How would I know?". From an academic's viewpoint the answer is far from simple. Readers can familiarise themselves with contemporary philosophy and literature, the earlier works that were in fashion at the time, the languages of the region and the history of the time and still be shown later to have over or undervalued aspects of the cultural milieu or missed some entirely. As an example, in the years immediately preceding and since the conference "Lucian and his Time" took place at Darwin College of the University of Kent in April 2007 much attention has been, rightly, given to the Syrian cultural aspects of Lucian's output that had previously been unconsidered in works such as Lightfoot's 2003 edition of the *De Dea Syria*. Had the wealth of non-Greek material not become available, we would remain even more in the dark about the extent to which we can take the details in that work in earnest and where 'the joke' lies than is now the case. Even so, as Lauren Moore notes, the emergence of Hittite texts in the later 20th century has at once opened up new avenues of understanding of the cult of Atargatis described in the *De Dea Syria*, while also leading commentators to undervalue the impact of the Aramean and Phoenician culture which is far more contemporary to Lucian's time than the Hittite culture.[1] The student's dilemma is impossible to resolve, as it is impossible for us to fully immerse ourselves in the culture in which Lucian wrote – as much as some of our colleagues may appear to do so. However, with every reading of these works, with every attempt to understand them against the standards of the period in which they were written we inch closer to our goal. Our image of Lucian and his works is deservedly much more complex than was the case a century ago, and, equally importantly, our understanding of the second century AD is

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[1] Moore 2008, 328-329

more than as something of a pit-stop between the Julio-Claudian emperors and the rise of Christianity.

The papers presented here address three important issues; the relationship between Lucian and his literary contemporaries, Lucian's attitudes to contemporary philosophy and religion and the evidence that Lucian can give us about society in the Imperial period and attitudes to Imperial power. Graham Anderson, Karen Ni-Mheallaigh, Robert Porod and Hannah Mossman approach the relationship between Lucian and his contemporaries from three very different angles. Karen Ni-Mheallaigh and Hannah Mossman have focussed their attention on the *True Histories*, but have taken two very different approaches to literary theory in the process. Whereas Karen Ni-Mheallaigh has focussed on the approaches to the composition of a meta-fictional text in the True Histories as compared with Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, Hannah Mossman examines geography in the True Histories and sets it in the context of works such as the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*. As a result we can see that two very different and very popular contemporary genres in Greek narrative literature are simultaneously represented by the *True Histories,* suggesting that to the ancient reader the difference between these genres was not so great as it might appear to a modern audience. Graham Anderson has focussed his attention, however, on a very different kind of storytelling in briefer works such as the *Toxaris* and *Philopseudes*. Here the focus is on what makes a good storyteller in these works and how this fits in with rhetorical and other standards of story telling at the time. Such story telling does have its own rhetorical goals and Anderson sets these alongside other traditional modes such as the fable. Lastly, Robert Porod has considers the most formal type of narrative, by showing in detail aspects of the role of historiography in Lucian's works, with a focus on the *De Historia Conscribenda*. As is pointed out in that article, Lucian's attitudes to the classic writers such as Thucydides and Herodotus are easily observed, but it is similarities and differences between Lucian, Arrian and Polybius that are considered by Porod to show a style of historiography that belongs entirely to the Imperial period and, importantly, to the Greek-speaking reader of the time.

That Lucian has much to show us about the religion and philosophy of his time, despite his usual satirical stance towards his topic material, can be seen in the articles by Stephen Evans, Steven Smith, Francesca Mestre and Pilar Gómez, and Keith Sidwell. The presence of a work specifically on mourning, the *de Luctu*, and the inclusion of a ritual lament in the *Cataplus* provides a fertile basis for Stephen Evans' consideration of ritual mourning as it appears in Lucian and the evidence we have for mourning

practices in Lucian's time. It is ethics that form the centrepiece of Steven Smith's article, with a focus of the moral framework that underlies Lucian's satirical stances in the *Verae Historiae* and *De Historia Conscribenda*, *inter alia*. The implications that Smith notes in his sources for Lucian's attitudes to imperial power are supported in the article by Francesca Mestre and Pilar Gómez, who consider the depictions of tyrants in the works of Lucian to show the consistency of Lucian's implied stance towards absolute rule and absolute rulers. Lastly, Sidwell explores the contextual links between Lucian's works, what we know of the works of Menippus and Old Comedy to both expand what we know about the *Demes* of Eupolis and explore further the interactions between political activism and Athenian comedy.

The focus then turns to what Lucian can show us about contemporary Imperial society. Heinz-Günther Nesselrath focuses on the large scale with a comparison of the image the Lucian presents us of Rome compared with that of Athens. At first glance the picture that emerges is one that sets the Romans as coarse, boorish and uncouth when compared with the refined and conservative Athenians. Nesselrath shows us, however, that although Athens is described in much more detail and attention than the shadowy presence of Rome, Lucian ultimately takes a position as an outsider to both cultures to show the strengths and failings of both. Similarly, Orestis Karavas shows us that Lucian's response to the religion of his time was far more nuanced than we might at first expect. Far from being indifferent to and dismissive of the religions of his time, Lucian is passionately engaged by what he saw. What emerges particularly is that Lucian reacts strongly where religion is used as a means of exploitation of its followers, but that on an aesthetic level he nonetheless was also strongly stimulated by what he saw. Isabelle Gassino then addresses a vexed question for all working on the literature of the second century AD – the extent to which the Latin language was familiar to the Greek authors of the period and their attitudes towards it. As Gassino points out, it would be easy to read the opinions that appear in the *Nigrinus* as suggesting a simplistically negative attitude to Roman cultural expression, including the Latin language. What emerges more is that Lucian disapproves of contamination of Greek by Latin, which suggests to us that this was a more common phenomenon than many modern commentators would suggest. Maria Pretzler considers what Lucian shows us about the contemporary understanding of visual art and what makes a classic painting in the following article, with evidence from the *Zeuxis* and *Eikones*. What is striking is the emphasis that Lucian places on composition, arrangement and the expression of emotion, compared with authors such as Philostratus. Certainly this is something that can also

be seen in some of the scenes in the *Dialogi Marini*, such as the scene of the abduction of Europa in dialogue 15. Lastly, this author considers the use of the Attic and Ionic dialects in the *Alexander* and *De Dea Syria* respectively. These works, which both describe the practice of religion associated on some level with Cybele in Lucian's homeland are completely different in their tone and aims, and it is possible to make observations about the social roles these dialects play in these works and more generally by an application of some the principles now used to consider dialect in cognitive linguistics.

The focus of this volume, then, becomes two-fold. Through the use of external evidence we endeavour to understand Lucian more deeply and by considering Lucian's works we try to understand contemporary society better. What has been noteworthy is the convergence of themes that we see over these papers. Religion, ritual, language and art, power, ethics and identity have been the focus in these papers. It is impossible to draw the dividing line, however, between what this says about Lucian and his time and what it shows of the themes that fascinate us as writers in our own.

PART I

LUCIAN AND HIS LITERARY CONTEMPORARIES

CHAPTER ONE

'IT'S HOW YOU TELL THEM': SOME ASPECTS OF LUCIAN'S ANECDOTES

GRAHAM ANDERSON

Anecdotes are often overlooked by students of literature: along with fables, proverbs and the like they tend to be seen as the mere *tesserae*, the artist's materials, for any literary performance. But perhaps rather more than fables or proverbs they can throw light on an author's outlook here or handling of detail there, and I shall attempt to show that in Lucian's case[1] they do both.

Lucian's repertoire and its classification:

We can attempt to classify his anecdotal materials as follows:

(a) 'literary' materials with a contemporary or realistic setting, sometimes represented by doublets elsewhere; these can be used as exempla, illustrative or cautionary tales, with a wide range of levels of elaboration, either as narratives for a didactic purpose or as entertainments for their own sake.

(b) spontaneous and authentic material arising directly out of Lucian's own personal experience, and normally uncorroborated even in contemporary sources.

There is naturally a good deal of flexibility: not all anecdotal material need belong to the world of yesterday or today: it is perfectly possible to represent tales about Socrates as 'anecdotal' by nature even when not presented by his contemporaries. The *diegema* ('narrative') was of course a normal part of rhetorical training, and it is in the more rhetorically based areas of Lucian's output that we tend to find them: not a great deal in the

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[1] For previous consideration of Lucian's anecdotes, J. Bompaire 1958, 452-469.

Menippean pieces, but in the more reflective philosophical dialogues, in the collections of short tales, in the rhetorical tirades, and indeed in the *prolaliae*, where they can make up most of the piece. Anecdotes are the very stuff of warm-up material ('a funny thing happened to me on the way to the Lucian conference…'). Because they belong to a repertoire of commonplaces, there is a good deal of readily available comparative material, by no means confined to the Second Sophistic background, and this comparative material can expect to throw further light on our author as well.

Good Instrument, Bad Performer: Lucian and the *Ad Herennium*

One of Lucian's most elaborate and vivid anecdotes is presented in *Adversus Indoctum* 8ff.: the elaborately dressed musician booed for his poor performance. The essence of the material is already known from an example in *Auctor ad Herennium* 4.60, which of course establishes that Lucian could not have been the inventor of the story. In the Latin source we have an elaborate description of the lyre-player's costume: gold-embroidered robe, purple mantle, jewelled crown and jewel-encrusted instrument, and imposing presence: then *vocem mittat acerbissimam cum turpissimo corporis motu.*

While the treatment here is elaborate enough, Lucian is able to offer us a great deal more. The performer's appearance is slightly different in detail: a gold laurel wreath with emeralds the size of berries, and the Muses, Apollo and Orpheus embossed on the instrument itself. This time however we are given specific name and place; we have one Evangelos of Tarentum, competing at the Pythian games, and we have a running order: first a competent perfomer Thespis of Thebes; then description of the awe of the spectators at the spectacle; then the performance – three strings broken, an unmusical thin voice, the whipping off the stage, legs bloody with the whips, and Evangelos picking up the jewels that had fallen out of the jewel-encrusted lyre.

Then an additional episode not in the *Auctor ad Herennium*: one Eumelus of Elis, a poor man with an old lyre with wooden pegs, comes on with the prize, and taunts Evangelos:

> You wear a gold laurel, for you are rich, but I a pauper wear the laurel of Delphi…

In fact both the Latin treatise and Lucian develop their material by way of a comparison: *Ad Herennium* with a rich man who lacks virtue, and Lucian with the rich book-collector who cannot even read and lacks taste.

We can now step back from the material and ask what Lucian's own contribution might have been. It would have been very unlikely for him to have known the version in the *Ad Herennium* itself, given the traditional snobbery of Greeks over the use of Latin literature let alone technical handbooks; but it seems natural enough to assume that he would have had access at the level of the *progymnasmata* to some Greek equivalent. Such handbooks routinely encourage their users to go through a number of versions, adding dialogue, syncrisis, ecphrasis, or the like to a given example: any of the differences from the Latin example may reflect Lucian's own invention, but already within a well established tradition. One notes, however, Lucian's inclinations elsewhere for the kind of scenario with which the tale ends: the humiliation of a pretentious figure in an elaborate costume: this image is a characteristic one throughout Lucian's oeuvre, most notably told of tragic actors required to hand back their costumes and similar variations[2].

The tales of supernatural experience in the *Philopseudes*

Now in the case of the *Ad Herennium* we are unfairly comparing Lucian's telling of the tale with a rather abstracted textbook example: how does he measure up when he is side by side with another practised raconteur? The case most readily to hand is the celebrated ghost story in Pliny *Letters* 7.27, with its doublet in *Philopseudes* 30f**.** The form of the story is traditional and fixed: the philosopher stays the night in the haunted house when others cannot, makes contact with the resident ghost, notes where it disappears, exhumes its unburied corpse, and all is well[3].

Pliny attaches it to a known philosopher Athenodorus and locates it in Athens, Lucian to a fictitious Pythagorean Arignotus ('Professor Prestigio') in Corinth. Pliny carefully describes the malaise, in part psychological, of those who are scared by the ghost, followed by the careful observations of the hero of the sounds and gestures of the apparition. Lucian's Arignotus by contrast is much more gung-ho about the whole business: he is plainly setting out to get the better of the ghost

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[2] On this 'trademark', Anderson 1976, 208 s.v. Actor image.
[3] For systematic running commentary on the *Philopseudes* tales, Ogden, 2008, following hard on the heels of Ebner et al. 2001; I shall discuss some occasional disagreements over details elsewhere.

rather than secure a decent burial for it; he has come armed with potent
imprecations, and he wants to establish that he is no ordinary member of
the haunted public.

It has long been clear that the difference between storytellers here is a
matter of temperament. Pliny is the model civil servant, Lucian the
mischievous satirist with *esprit*, determined as ever to undermine a
boastful charlatan[4]. On that basis Lucian's version is often dismissed as
not observing or understanding the mechanism of the tale: the ghost
should not after all be scaring people off for the sake of it, but wishing to
attract someone sympathetic to giving it a decent burial. But that is all part
of Lucian's strategy here: the point is to present Arignotus as a pompous
and patronising figure, and as a narrator comically carried away by his
own eloquence as a *magus gloriosus*.

If we look at the rest of the anecdotes in the *Philopseudes* we have a
useful anthology of first-person narrative techniques: the narrators are
presented as drawing on their own personal experiences, or those of their
friends (the latter characteristic for unverifiable wonder-tales), very much
in a stream-of-consciousness sequence ('that reminds me of someone I
knew'…). Occasionally too they will call on servants or others to
corroborate patently incredible details, or even to exaggerate them still
further, which they do with suspicious alacrity: Lucian wishes to present
the impression of a conspiracy of liars, of which only his own port-parole
Tychiades is not a part; he can then start a last tale cut off by *aposiopesis*
when he himself walks out in disgust…Personal mannerisms are
highlighted during conversations over detail, as when the host Eucrates
shows his lack of artistic taste by his praise of the tasteless miracle-
working manikin rather than the masterpieces of Greek sculpture beside
him: here is a nouveau riche who puts credulity before art[5]. Modern
familiarity with the last complete tale, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice', based
on its figuring Mickey Mouse in the title role within Disney's *Fantasia*,
conceals what is probably its most important feature in Lucian's
presentation: the tale's unverifiability. Although the old greybeard
Eucrates can remember the tale from his foolish youth, he dare not prove it
by repeating the formula to animate the magic helpers, as he will not be
able to stop them afterwards (*Philopseudes* 33-36).

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[4] Cf. A.N. Sherwin-White 1966, ad loc.
[5] *Philopseudes* 18 ff. For a good analogue to this tale in local legend, M. Luethi
1976, 84f.

Tales of friendship in *Toxaris*

Lucian's other tale collection, the *Toxaris*, insists on the immediacy of its tales, when a Scythian and a Greek agree to supply contemporary examples of friendship through recent instances. But if they begin in a context that expects anecdote, most rapidly develop into full-blown novella. Lucian has taken a good deal of care over precisions of detail: names and provenance of the pairs of friends, care over the attributions of evidence and 'where they are now', so as to verify the claims of outstanding support of friends as far as possible, while each of the two storytellers voices increasing scepticism of the claims of the other. For example, the second Greek tale is attributed largely to a sea captain Simylus of Megara, supposedly an eyewitness of how one friend rescued a weaker one overboard in a storm at sea: he is only able to describe the event as far as he saw it; only Euthydicus of Chalcis, the rescuer, is able to finish the story of how the pair came ashore. (*Tox.* 19ff.). The narrator Mnesippus is careful to control his urge to describe the storm itself (19, 20) and keep to realistic nautical detail instead.

The Doublet tales in *Piscator* 36, *Apology* 5

Sometimes we can infer something from Lucian's own treatment of anecdote material in more than one form. This occurs, for example, when he treats the monkey dressed for a charade: one moment the animal is masquerading in the purple robe, the next when someone scatters nuts it immediately reverts to type (*Piscator* 36; *Apology* 5)[6]. In *Piscator* we are dealing with a troupe of monkeys, in *Apologia* with a single one. In *Piscator* we have an unnamed king of Egypt as the trainer; in *Apologia* the owner is a specific queen, Cleopatra; in *Piscator* there is an orchestrated dance-routine, the *pyrrhiche*; in *Apologia* the animal is performing with singers and flute-players in a wedding procession. In both instances the costume consists of masks as well as elaborate robes; in *Piscator* the spectacle is disrupted by a *theates tis asteios* who throws nuts, while in *Apologia* the single monkey finds a fig or almond.

The differences are accounted for to some extent by the contexts, especially the terms of the comparison Lucian wishes to draw: in *Piscator* he is condemning latter-day philosophers, so it is convenient to have a plurality of monkeys. There is also perhaps a sense in which Lucian sees the *theates tis asteios* throwing the nuts as a wag in his own image: in the

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[6] For discussion, Anderson 1980, 259f.

next chapter he declares his intention never to stop criticising and making fun of them. Such a figure cannot appear in the *Apologia*, where an imaginary interlocutor is comparing Lucian himself to the monkey in the singular and taking him to task for the hypocrisy of having taken an administrative post in Egypt after condemning private tutors in the service of Roman grandees.

One interesting detail seems to me questionable in both cases, and that is regarding the animal behaviour: the business of destroying the costumes, then eating the food. An animal in the situation described might destroy the costumes incidentally in the free-for all to get at the food; the last thing the monkeys would do would be to break the masks, tear the costumes, *then* go for the food. The single monkey in *Apologia* might be in less of a hurry than the troupe, but stills it is more likely to make a dash for the food, destroying the costume only incidentally.

It is obvious enough that the story is well established, in whatever form, and Lucian could hardly have invented it. Aristides attributes some such material to Archilochus (Cf. frr. 185ff. West), and there is a human version in Quintilian 6.1.47: boys are distracted from performing as claqueurs by the throwing of nuts; and there is a good example in Claudian against Eutropius (1.300ff.) – a performing monkey is dressed in costly robes in front but with bare buttocks behind.

Sometimes the identity of a story in Lucian has not been recognised: where else, for example, do we find the story of Pyrrhus of Epirus, convinced by his flatterers that he resembles Alexander the Great; but the old woman from Larissa, asked which portrait bust he most resembles, tells him the honest answer that he most resembles Batrachion the cook of Larissa (*Adversus Indoctum* 21) – proof that there was already in antiquity a 'mixed' version of 'The Emperor's New Clothes' involving a con-trick with works of art, and underlining that the point of the story is not in royal nudity as such, but in the fact that only the outsider with nothing to gain will give an honest answer when all others are flatterers.

Sometimes the boundary between anecdote and much more elaborate treatment is quite fluid: for example, the story in Lucian's *Navigium*, of the man who day-dreams that the great ship in the harbour is his, occurs in anecdote form in Aelian's *Varia Historia* 4.25, where an individual has a mad pastime of doing precisely that, and even when cured of his malady declares that his happiest time was when suffering from it. Lucian's development of the piece might easily have had Aelian's anecdote as a predecessor (not necessarily garnered from Aelian himself). It seems less likely that Aelian redeveloped the anecdote from Lucian's elaborate and complex piece. Or again, a story like that told against Favorinus in

Demonax 12 that the eunuch lacks the *orcheis* to practise philosophy[7], finds itself worked into an elaborate satirical drama in Eunuchus, a kind of dramatised *controversia*: should Bagoas claim to be virile in order to qualify as a philosopher, and incur a charge of adultery; or should he refute the charge of adultery by claiming to be a eunuch, and so disqualify himself from being a natural member of the human race?

In other instances we seem to be looking at little more than the raw material of anecdotes, as in the special case of the *Demonax*, where Lucian collects over fifty *bons mots* of one of his own philosophical teachers. Even where the material is found in very different cultural contexts elsewhere it seems very unlikely that Lucian is inventing or misattributing material here: Demonax most probably did use all the material, from whatever source, to the best of Lucian's own recollection. Yet perhaps oddly none of the individual anecdotes actually seem to involve Lucian himself as a hearer.

A special category might be made for the telling of anecdotes by mythical characters, especially in the miniature dialogues. Here the context and time-frame will be entirely different, when familiar characters from myth can retell familiar literary situations from Homer or comparable mythical tradition as 'hot news' however venerable the literary tradition through which they are normally familiar: Agamemnon can be called to account for snubbing Odysseus the other day in the Underworld (*D. Mort.* 23); or one of the winds can be 'filled in' on the wedding procession of Zeus and Europa (*D.Mar*. 15).

Anecdotes from direct experience

A special category of anecdote relates to Lucian's actual professional experience as a sophistic figure: occasionally in the *prolaliae* or elsewhere he will have occasion to tell us what he did or heard the other day, much as Pliny the Younger might be inclined to do.

Perhaps it might be suggested that Lucian is most effective when his professional involvement is most intense, as in the anecdote that drives the whole tirade of the *Pseudologista* (5-9). Anecdote it steadfastly remains, as an account of two connected incidents in Lucian's personal quarrel with a rhetorical rival; the similar tale told by Philostratus (*VS* 578f.) about Philagrus of Cilicia points to a genuine event in the rhetorical rough-and-tumble of Second Sophistic performances. Rather than tell it off the cuff,

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[7] For background to Demonax' actual cases, Jones 1986, 90-98.

Lucian accords it special prominence by purporting to invite the Menander prologue Exposure (*pro Lapsu* 4) to tell the facts of the story for him: Lucian has been gravely insulted and ridiculed in front of witnesses, and he is going to make his tormentor pay.

Conclusion

What might be said overall, then, about Lucian as a purveyor of anecdote? Comparative materials do not take long to show that Lucian's satirical gusto and subtle control of detail mark him out as conspicuously effective; it is also a field of activity where his preoccupations can be easily deployed and recycled: an incompetent lyre-player and hypocritical philosopher are readily interchangeable; the real and mythical world are similarly so: the story of Evangelos and the lyre at Delphi is followed by the fate of the man torn to pieces by his dogs when he retrieves Orpheus' lyre from the river.

Comparison with any of his Second Sophistic contemporaries who have been studied in the area of anecdote or storytelling tend to give Lucian the edge: like Gellius he is particularly illuminating when he is personally and professionally involved; but unlike Gellius he seldom fails to transmit a traditional tale without leaving his own particular stamp. In the case of Dio of Prusa, where we are dealing with a comparably established professional writer, Lucian again tends to have the edge, perhaps because Dio tends to be philosopher first and raconteur second, as Lucian never appears to be[8]; only in the case of Apuleius do we seem to find comparable verve, but seldom in respect of material that can be directly compared.

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[8] For a similar verdict from the Dio side, Anderson 2000, 158ff.

CHAPTER TWO

MONUMENTAL FALLACY:
THE TELEOLOGY OF ORIGINS
IN LUCIAN'S *VERAE HISTORIAE*

KAREN NÍ-MHEALLAIGH

Much of the pleasure of reading the *Verae Historiae* derives, as Lucian promises in the preface, from engagement with the games, which the author constructs for his readers. This paper explores the text's playful strategy of problematizing its own origins—a *jouissance* in self-enigma, which the *VH* shares with contemporary metafictional texts such as Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon*.[1] By prompting, but repeatedly frustrating, the reader's quest for the narrative's origins in the "real" world, including the author himself, the *VH* exposes the fallacy of the very idea of origins, and explores the dangers inherent in the cultural privileging of origins through intentionalist readings (which attempt to reconstruct the thoughts of the original author), literary *mimēsis*, and the supremacy of origin-related criteria such as the author and authenticity in literary and textual criticism.

Lucian's assertion of the non-documentary nature of his text in the preface to the *VH* raises the problem of intentionalist readings programmatically.

κἂν ἓν γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο ἀληθεύσω λέγων ὅτι ψεύδομαι. οὕτω δ᾽ ἄν μοι δοκῶ καὶ τὴν παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων κατηγορίαν ἐκφυγεῖν αὐτὸς ὁμολογῶν μηδὲν ἀληθὲς λέγειν. γράφω τοίνυν περὶ ὧν μήτε εἶδον μήτε ἔπαθον μήτε παρ᾽ ἄλλων ἐπυθόμην, ἔτι δὲ μήτε ὅλως ὄντων μήτε τὴν ἀρχὴν γενέσθαι δυναμένων. διὸ δεῖ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας μηδαμῶς πιστεύειν αὐτοῖς.

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[1] For these texts' games with their own cultural and authorial origins, see Kahane 2001 and Too 2001 (on Apuleius) and Whitmarsh 2003 and Ní Mheallaigh 2007 (on Achilles Tatius).

> But this is the one truth that I shall tell—that I am lying—for in this way I believe I may escape the censure of others, by admitting myself that I speak nothing of the truth. And so I am writing about things which I neither saw nor experienced nor learned from others—moreover about things which do not exist, nor could ever exist from the start. For this reason, readers should in no way believe them.[2]

Framed by the liar-paradox, how is it possible to interpret the truth-claims of such a self-confessed liar? The impossibility of discerning precisely where the author's mendacities begin radically equivocalizes his intentionality. Lucian's preface, therefore, playfully highlights the fallacy of the notion that the author's intentions are reliably recoverable through the text. This ironic disavowal of the narrative's veracity inverts the *topos* of historiographical prefaces, where the author typically asserts and justifies his narrative's faithful relatability to extra-textual events and persons – the "real" world.[3] Lucian, however, ironises the very idea fundamental to historiography, that texts—any texts—monumentalize the human achievements and events that lie outside them. As he candidly admits, his decision to write the *VH* is motivated not from the desire to record actual "real-life" events, but to write *himself* into posterity – in a sense, to generate a self and origin, through the act of writing:

> διόπερ καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπὸ κενοδοξίας ἀπολιπεῖν τι σπουδάσας τοῖς μεθ' ἡμᾶς, ἵνα μὴ μόνος ἄμοιρος ὦ τῆς ἐν τῷ μυθολογεῖν ἐλευθερίας, ἐπεὶ μηδὲν ἀληθὲς ἱστορεῖν εἶχον—οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐπεπόνθειν ἀξιόλογον—ἐπὶ τὸ ψεῦδος ἐτραπόμην …

> For this reason, motivated by zeal—on account of my vanity—to leave something to posterity, so that I should not be the only one without a share in the license to tell stories, since I had nothing true to relate—for I had never had any experience worthy of account—I turned to lies…[4]

The text's explicit deracination from any real originative experience or extra-textual referent reinforces its literary epigonality, and makes it a test-site for the inter-relationality of text and origins, the text and what lies in the real world outside the text. As Mossman argues in this volume, the teleology of the narrative—Lucian's search for the *end* of the Ocean (τί τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ)—reflects the reader's teleological desire to reach the end of the narrative (an unachievable *telos*, as the text is

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[2] Lucian, *VH* 1.4. All translations in this paper are my own.
[3] On the *topoi* of prefaces, see Genette 1997, chapter 8.
[4] *VH* 1.4.

avowedly incomplete). His quest to encounter those who inhabit *the other side* (τίνες οἱ πέραν κατοικοῦντες) also mirrors the reader's desire to see through the looking-glass to the antipodean origins underpinning the text, including: a referent for the narrative in the real world (in spite of Lucian's warning in the preface that none exists), the real author (Lucian's autobiographical disclaimer notwithstanding), the literary origins to which he claims to allude (but how can we be sure these putative hypotexts aren't fictive?),[5] and finally the original *VH* in its entirety, including the books promised at *VH* 2.47 (which do not exist). By its playful insistence on, and denial of, the possibility of origins outside itself, the *VH* stages and ironises the desire to retrace the text—any text—to its "real" originator or originative context, and to read it as a trustworthy monument.

Reading the first adventure: *Quellenforschung*

By challenging the reader in the preface to identify the latent presence of an unspecified number of authors in his text, Lucian thematises the quest for authorial origins programmatically.

> …τῶν ἱστορουμένων ἕκαστον οὐκ ἀκωμῳδήτως ᾔνικται πρός τινας τῶν παλαιῶν ποιητῶν τε καὶ συγγραφέων καὶ φιλοσόφων … οὓς καὶ ὀνομαστὶ ἂν ἔγραφον, εἰ μὴ καὶ αὐτῷ σοι ἐκ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως φανεῖσθαι ἔμελλον

> Every detail of the narrative alludes—in a manner not unlike comedy—to some of the ancient poets and prose-authors and philosophers…whom I would name in my text, were it not for the fact that they will be apparent to you yourself from your reading.[6]

Reading the narrative, therefore, becomes an act of literary archaeology. This is mirrored by the very first hermeneutic act narrated at *VH* 1.7, where Lucian matches the inscription recording the arrival of Heracles and Dionysus on the island against the gigantic foot-prints in the rock nearby:

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[5] At *Rhet. Praec.* 17, for example, the speaker recommends fabricating ancient authors to cover up one's mistakes, in language that closely echoes Lucian's disclaimer in the preface of the *VH*: ἂν σολοικίσῃς δὲ ἢ βαρβαρίσῃς, ἓν ἔστω φάρμακον ἡ ἀναισχυντία, καὶ πρόχειρον εὐθὺς ὄνομα οὔτε ἡ ἀναισχυντία, καὶ πρόχειρον εὐθὺς ὄνομα οὔτε ὄντος τινὸς οὔτε γενομένου ποτέ, ἢ ποιητοῦ ἢ συγγραφέως … "If you commit a solecism or barbarism, let shamelessness be your one remedy, and be ready at once with the name of a poet or historian who does not, nor ever did exist…"

[6] *VH* 1.2.

…ὁρῶμέν τινα στήλην χαλκοῦ πεποιημένην, Ἑλληνικοῖς γράμμασιν καταγεγραμμένην, ἀμυδροῖς δὲ καὶ ἐκτετριμμένοις, λέγουσαν Ἄχρι τούτων Ἡρακλῆς καὶ Διόνυσος ἀφίκοντο. ἦν δὲ καὶ ἴχνη δύο πλησίον ἐπὶ πέτρας, τὸ μὲν πλεθριαῖον, τὸ δὲ ἔλαττον—ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν, τὸ μὲν τοῦ Διονύσου, τὸ μικρότερον, θάτερον δὲ Ἡρακλέους.

…we saw a column made of bronze, inscribed with Greek letters, obscure and worn away, saying: To this point Heracles and Dionysus came. And there were two footprints nearby on the rock, one a hundred feet long, the other smaller; it seemed to me that the latter one, the smaller, belonged to Dionysus, and the other to Heracles.

The divine footprints and an adjacent river of wine are adduced as proof of the inscription's claim, verifying the gods' earlier presence on the island;[7] all three function as signs, which lead the reader back to origins exterior and anterior to the text.

The footprints and river are also, themselves, metaphors for literary *mimēsis*. In *Rhet. Praec.* 9, for example, the instructor who offers to lead the *tiro* scholar on the steeply arduous path to *paideia* shows him a glimpse of "the footprints of Demosthenes and Plato and some others, in size exceeding those of today's writers, but obscure already and many of them unclear with time…"

τὰ Δημοσθένους ἴχνη καὶ Πλάτωνος καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν, μεγάλα μὲν καὶ ὑπὲρ τοὺς νῦν, ἀμαυρὰ δὲ ἤδη καὶ ἀσαφῆ τὰ πολλὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου…

To achieve *paideia*, the scholar must emulate Classical authors—literally by following in their footsteps. The similarities with the *VH* passage invite a closer, intertextual reading: [8] in both texts, the footprints represent models greater than their emulators; the time-worn obscurity of the *footprints* in *Rhet. Praec.*, which mirrors the faded letters of the *inscription* in the *VH*, reinforces the inscription's status as the textual imprint of ancient, now-absent, authors.

Rivers, rising from a source, are also a key metaphor for literary *mimēsis*. The ultimate source is, of course, Homer, as illustrated in the

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[7] *VH* 1.7: ἐπήιει οὖν ἡμῖν πολὺ μᾶλλον πιστεύειν τῷ ἐπὶ τῆς στήλης ἐπιγράμματι, ὁρῶσι τὰ σημεῖα τῆς Διονύσου ἐπιδημίας. "It occurred to us to put far greater trust in the inscription of the column, seeing the signs of Dionysus' visit."

[8] Heracles and Dionysus are also mentioned together just prior to this passage at *Rhet. Praec.* 7 (the formidable path to learning appears to the *tiro* to require the fortitude of Dionysus and Heracles to climb it).

following image from ps.-Longinus *On the Sublime*, which describes
Plato's emulation of the poet:

…ὁ Πλάτων, ἀπὸ τοῦ Ὁμηρικοῦ κείνου νάματος εἰς αὐτὸν μυρίας ὅσας
παρατροπὰς ἀποχετευσάμενος.

Plato, drawing to himself myriad channels from that Homeric spring[9]

The peculiar substance of Lucian's river—wine—reinforces these
associations with literary inspiration, and, as von Möllendorff argues,
Lucian's comment about its resemblance specifically to *Chian* wine points
towards Homer as the ultimate source of that inspiration, affirming
Lucian's claims in the preface about Homer's status at the head of the
tradition of literary lies.[10] The presence of these two metaphors in
Lucian's first adventure at *VH* 1.7 activates the reader's awareness of the
meta-literary nature of the entire episode, which recycles the Heraclean
footprint in Scythia from Herodotus 4.82, as well as the springs and rivers
of marvellous substances from paradoxographical texts – just as the author
promised he would.[11] In short, Lucian's detection of his predecessors-in-
adventure, Heracles and Dionysus, parallels the reader's recognition of
Lucian's literary precedents, especially Herodotus and Ctesias.

The very first act of reading *in* the text, therefore, dramatizes the meta-
literary reading *of* the text, and the author's recreation of origins through
literary *mimēsis*. Remembering that this text challenges its readers
constantly to read *otherwise*, especially to contemplate its meta-literary
dimensions,[12] Lucian's search for the source of the wine-river (*VH* 1.7-8)
stages the originary impetus of reading, one aspect of which is the
intentionalist quest for the source of meaning. Upon painstakingly
retracing the river's course, Lucian's discovery of no single origin, but
instead a plurality of springs, is suggestive of the post-modernist view that
there is no single origin; where one seeks unity, one finds plurality; where

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[9] *On the Sublime* 13.3. At 35.4, the human admiration for greatness is likened to
our natural wonder at the world's mighty rivers, the Nile, Danube, Rhine, and the
stream of Ocean; these rivers embody the same qualities of grandeur and 'divinity'
as authors such as Plato (mentioned explicitly in this section), Homer and
Demosthenes.

[10] Von Möllendorff 2000, 88; see *VH* 1.3: ἀρχηγὸς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ διδάσκαλος τῆς
τοιαύτης βωμολοχίας ὁ τοῦ Ὁμήρου Ὀδυσσεύς ("Their leader and instructor in
this sort of charlatanry is Homer's Odysseus…"). Chios is first among the various
birthplaces attributed to Homer at *VH* 2.20.

[11] For a survey of parallels, see von Möllendorff 2000, 83-84.

[12] *VH* 1.2-4.

one seeks the original, one finds already a copy.[13] In fact, as Lucian acquires more information about the sources of the river, their originary status undergoes even further diffusion: these multiple sources are themselves hybrid beings (half-vegetation, half-women) and multi-lingual (they speak Lydian, Indian and Greek). Their linguistic diversity may be the result of interaction with the earlier divine visitors to the island; paradoxically, therefore, these very "sources" appear in fact to be the product of earlier cultural contamination, removing their originary status to a further regress.

The meta-literary symbolism of the wine-river, combined with the text's explicit mimeticism, invite the interpretation of Lucian's first adventure in the narrative—his encounter with the vine-women who are the *sources* of the river—as a dramatization of contemporary literary culture's relation with its own origins in the Archaic and Classical past. The narrative reveals that this relationship is profoundly ambivalent.[14]

Τότε δὲ τὸν ποταμὸν διαπεράσαντες … εὕρομεν ἀμπέλων χρῆμα τεράστιον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, ὁ στέλεχος αὐτὸς εὐερνὴς καὶ παχύς, τὸ δὲ ἄνω γυναῖκες ἦσαν, ὅσον ἐκ τῶν λαγόνων ἅπαντα ἔχουσαι τέλεια—τοιαύτη παρ' ἡμῖν τὴν Δάφνην γράφουσιν ἄρτι τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος καταλαμβάνοντος ἀποδενδρουμένην.…προσελθόντας δὲ ἡμᾶς ἠσπάζοντο καὶ ἐδεξιοῦντο…καὶ ἐφίλουν δὲ ἡμᾶς τοῖς στόμασιν· ὁ δὲ φιληθεὶς αὐτίκα ἐμέθυεν καὶ παράφορος ἦν. Δρέπεσθαι μέντοι οὐ παρεῖχον τοῦ καρποῦ, ἀλλ' ἤλγουν καὶ ἐβόων ἀποσπωμένου. αἱ δὲ καὶ μίγνυσθαι ἡμῖν ἐπεθύμουν· καὶ δύο τινὲς τῶν ἑταίρων πλησιάσαντες αὐταῖς οὐκέτι ἀπελύοντο, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν αἰδοίων ἐδέδεντο· συνεφύοντο γὰρ καὶ συνερριζοῦντο. καὶ ἤδη αὐτοῖς κλάδοι ἐπεφύκεσαν οἱ δάκτυλοι, καὶ ταῖς ἕλιξι περιπλεκόμενοι ὅσον οὐδέπω καὶ αὐτοὶ καρποφορήσειν ἔμελλον.

Then, having crossed the river… we discovered something marvellous about the vines: the part which comes from the earth, the trunk itself, was sappy and thick, but in the upper part they were women, with all the perfect features from the waist up -just like our paintings of Daphne turning into a tree on the point when Apollo is catching her… They greeted us as we came near and clasped our hands… And they kissed us on our mouths: once kissed, a man became drunk and lost his senses. They did not, however, allow us to harvest their fruit, but felt pain and cried out whenever someone plucked them. But they were eager to have sex with us

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[13] See Whitmarsh, 2001, 45.

[14] Larmour 1997 and Georgiadou and Larmour 1998 read Lucian's encounter with the vine-women as an allegory for the reader's encounter with mendacious narrative; see von Möllendorff, 2000 92-94 for this figure as a calque upon allegorical interpretations of the Lotus-eaters story in *Od.* 9.91-95.

-and when two of our comrades approached them, they could no longer be disentangled, but were bound by the genitals, fusing and rooting together, and already their fingers had grown into branches, and they were ensnared more densely than ever in tendrils, about to bear fruit themselves as well.[15]

The vine-women represent the originary, canonical texts which are imitated, while Lucian and his crew, who are newcomers to their island, represent contemporary literature, with its desire to court the literary models of the past. The fact that the sources of the river are gendered *female* in Lucian's narrative repays consideration: their twin status as *fruit-bearing vines* and *sources* emphasizes the generative, maternal aspects of the literary tradition, against its prevailing conceptualization as masculine, phallic, patriarchal.[16] In a well-known passage from the earlier treatise *On the Sublime* attributed to Longinus, for example, the effect of drawing literary inspiration from Homer is illustrated by analogy with the Delphic priestess:

> πολλοὶ γὰρ ἀλλοτρίῳ θεοφοροῦνται πνεύματι τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ὃν καὶ τὴν Πυθίαν λόγος ἔχει τρίποδι πλησιάζουσαν, ἔνθα ῥῆγμά ἐστι γῆς ἀναπνέον, ὥς φασιν, ἀτμὸν ἔνθεον, αὐτόθεν ἐγκύμονα τῆς δαιμονίου καθισταμένην δυνάμεως παραυτίκα χρησμῳδεῖν κατ' ἐπίπνοιαν· οὕτως ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀρχαίων μεγαλοφυΐας εἰς τὰς τῶν ζηλούντων ἐκείνους ψυχὰς ὡς ἀπὸ ἱερῶν στομίων ἀπόρροιαί τινες φέρονται, ὑφ' ὧν ἐπιπνεόμενοι καὶ οἱ μὴ λίαν φοιβαστικοὶ τῷ ἑτέρων συνενθουσιῶσι μεγέθει.

> For many are possessed by an alien spirit in the same manner as tradition holds that the Pythia, upon approaching the tripod -where, so they say, there is a chasm in the earth, exhaling divine fumes-is impregnated from that source by a divine power, and instantly produces oracles under inspiration. In this way, certain effluences pass, as if from sacred apertures, from the genius of the ancients into the souls of those emulators; once inspired by these, even those who are not particularly susceptible to possession rave with admiration for the greatness of others.[17]

As Whitmarsh points out, this passage is Platonic, both in its appropriation of imagery which associates inspiration and literary composition, and in its privileging of the original by constructing mimetic authors as passive

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[15] *VH* 1.8.

[16] See the excellent analysis of mimetic literature's filial relation to its ancient models in ps.-Longinus' *On the Sublime* in Whitmarsh 2001, 57-71; Whitmarsh's exposition of *mimēsis* as an Oedipal engagement with the "*father*-text" Whitmarsh 2001, 61 is germane to my argument throughout this section.

[17] *On the Sublime* 13.2.

receptacles of the genius of the great authors of the past: "The paternal text dominates the imitator, inseminating him or her with an alien presence."[18] The implications of this filial relationship between imitator and model emerge more fully and paradoxically in 13.4, where Longinus, in praising Plato for his attempts not just to emulate but to outdo Homer, presents *mimēsis* also in terms of an Oedipal combat with the father-text—in an 'apparent conceptual clash' with the earlier paradigm.[19] A third position is opened up, only to be rejected, by Longinus' insistence that imitation is, in Too's words, an "inspirational experience," rather than a mechanical appropriation of earlier models by posterior literature, which Longinus describes as "theft"—κλοπή.[20] *Mimēsis*, therefore, is conceptualized through a plurality of paradigms as inspiration and impregnation by father-text, as combat with father-text, and as theft from tradition—a model that is repudiated.

Lucian's narrative answers these paradigms in multiple ways. It is precisely this latter model of *mimēsis* as theft which is enacted by the men's attempts to harvest the vine-women's fruit—δρέπεσθαι τοῦ καρποῦ—a phrase which contains a sexual metaphor,[21] and here hints at rape, as the pain with which the vine-women react signifies the tradition's resistance to such violent appropriation. Lucian's representation of the literary tradition as *maternal* inverts the patriarchal model, and adds the patina of incest to the men's desire to copulate with them. Lucian therefore constructs the mimetic drive in contemporary literature as an Oedipal desire to empower the subject by union with the *mother*, instead of the Longinian concept of an eristic engagement with the father. However, Lucian's narrative also reverses the directionality of contemporary literary culture's copulative desires: the vine-women's active desire for intercourse with the men articulates—paradoxically—*tradition's* desire to hybridize "μίγνυσθαι" posterior literature. Their aggressive sexuality manifests as narcissism—an assimilative desire to reproduce the self in another. Lucian's comparison of the vine-women with paintings of Daphne undergoing metamorphosis inscribes this process as a Dionysiac *reversal* of the paradigmatic male pursuit of female. The men's contact with these females is presented initially as an "inspirational experience" which dislocates the self in a process that is analogous to the Pythia's possession in Longinus' text—the men become drunk and παράφοροι, "transported, maddened." However, Lucian significantly invokes Apollo, the Pythian

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[18] Whitmarsh 2001, 59.
[19] Whitmarsh 2001, 61.
[20] Too 1998: 210; *On the Sublime* 13.4.
[21] Von Möllendorff 2000, 93, n. 33.